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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
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Policies and Rules Concerning)
Children's Television Programming) MM Docket No. 93-48
)
Revision of Programming Policies)
for Television Broadcast Stations)

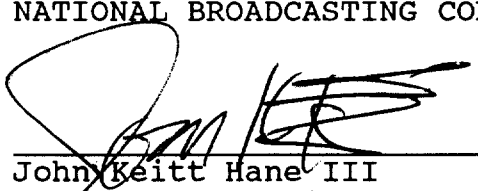
REPLY COMMENTS OF NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

National Broadcasting Company, Inc. (NBC) hereby submits, as reply comments, the written testimony of Linda Mancuso before the before the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance of the Energy and Commerce Committee, U.S. House of Representatives. Ms. Mancuso, who is NBC's Vice President for Saturday Morning and Family Programs, testified before the Subcommittee on June 10, 1994 regarding NBC's efforts to implement the Children's Television Act.

Ms. Mancuso's testimony is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.


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Its Counsel

July 11, 1994

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STATEMENT OF LINDA MANCUSO
VICE PRESIDENT, SATURDAY MORNING AND FAMILY PROGRAMS
NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

before the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance
of the Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

June 10, 1994

TESTIMONY OF LINDA MANCUSO

Vice President, Saturday Morning and Family Programs
National Broadcasting Company, Inc.

My name is Linda Mancuso. I am the Vice President of Saturday Morning and Family Programs for NBC. I oversee the development and production of all NBC's children's programs on Saturday morning and the family specials in prime time. Before coming to the Network nine years ago, I was Managing Producer of all public affairs programs for NBC's local station in Chicago.

I am here today to tell you about what NBC has been doing for children since the implementation of the Children's Television Act, and what we plan to do in the future. I think you will agree that our commitment to providing children with quality educational and informational programming is genuine and has steadily increased since the implementation of the Act.

When the Children's Television Act was adopted SAVED BY THE BELL was already on NBC's schedule. This program is a live action comedy series specifically designed for teens that blends humor, adventure and positive social messages. In the course of adopting the Children's Television Act and implementing regulations, both Congress and the FCC acknowledged SAVED BY THE BELL as a program

whose treatment of "topical problems and conflicts faced by teens" served the educational and informational needs of this segment of the child audience.

Over the five seasons it has been on NBC's schedule, SAVED BY THE BELL has become a franchise program that attracts teens in over 50 countries. Thousands of viewer letters each week tell us that the audience looks to our multi-cultural cast of characters as role models in their lives. This show has been given the Angel Award, Golden Eagle Award, Humanitas nominations, an Imagen nomination for positive portrayals of Latinos, and a citation from President Bush's Commission on the Handicapped.

SAVED BY THE BELL attracted a higher concentration of teens than any show on network television, whether on Saturday morning or prime time. So, in 199 we decided to build on that strength. We completely abandoned cartoons in favor of an entire block of live-action programs for the most underserved segment of the television audience -- teens. We believed we could create entertaining and informative programming that could provide this impressionable and vulnerable group of young people with programming that was entertaining, positive and informative.

Since 1992 was the first year of the programming requirements of the Children's Television Act, we set another major goal for

ourselves: to be the first network on the air with a weekly series designed specifically to fulfill the requirements of the new law.

Educational and informational programs for teens was uncharted territory, not only for the networks but for the children's television production community. NBC invested enormous amounts of time and resources in developing and testing different concepts that would educate as well as entertain teens. With the aid of educational consultants, social scientists and teenagers, we created NAME YOUR ADVENTURE. This show asks teens from across the country to write in and tell us what their aspirations are, who their role models are, and what they're curious about. NAME YOUR ADVENTURE then makes these dreams become a reality by taking a teen on the adventure of his or her choice. The adventures are used creatively to explore the educational, informational and pro-social dimensions of the teens' experiences. The program highlights principles of science, events related to history, the workings of government, the beauty of the arts and music, the uniqueness of nature, the achievement of personal goals, and the contributions of various individuals to American life. The series also tries to integrate into the content social messages related to the value of education, the importance of teamwork, the value of self-discipline and self-esteem, and the value of a healthy mind and body.

NAME YOUR ADVENTURE has won the National Educational Film and

Vide Silver Apple Award and two Youth in Film Awards. It is endorsed by the National Education Association and has received letters of appreciation and commendation from Senators, the White House Press Department, the FBI, the U.S. Department of the Interior, numerous educators and social organizations. President Clinton praised the show in a press conference when a Vietnamese high school student went on her chosen "adventure" by spending the day in the White House with her role model, Dee Dee Myers.

Other adventurers have experienced being a paramedic, school principal, geologist, doctor, oceanographer, police officer, pilot, athlete, chef, film director, Navy Seal, orchestra conductor, Senator and FBI agent. We've sent kids to rain forests, glaciers, underwater marine labs, farms, caves and archeological digs. Our theme for NAME YOUR ADVENTURE is "learning can be an adventure."

Thus, by the start of the 1992-93 season, NBC had achieved both its goals: We were on the air with a live-action program block specifically targeted to teens that included a one-hour version of SAVED BY THE BELL, a program that had been cited by both Congress and the FCC. We were was also the first network to offer a weekly program that was specifically developed in response to the Act's requirement for educational and informational children's programs.

As we approach the upcoming season -- the third season of teen programs on NBC -- we have made the ultimate commitment to our affiliates and our audience. Starting this fall, virtually every program on NBC's Saturday morning programming block will be specifically designed to serve the educational and informational needs of teens. Our schedule will include two half hours of SAVED BY THE BELL, NAME YOUR ADVENTURE and another half hour live-action program called CALIFORNIA DREAMS. In addition, the NBA, which supplies NBC with a program called INSIDE STUFF, has informed us that starting this fall the show will also be designed to serve the educational and informational needs of the teen audience. Thus, NBC will be able to furnish its affiliates with two and a half hours of educational programming for teens during the 1994-95 season.

CALIFORNIA DREAMS is created and supervised by Peter Engel, who is also responsible for SAVED BY THE BELL. In the past, these three live-action half hours have dealt with such issues of concern to teens as drugs, drunk driving, death, racism, divorce and physical handicap. For the upcoming season, we plan to produce episodes on steroid use, eating disorders, blood drives and non-violent resolution of conflict (using the "Squash It" theme). We will also continue to realize how much importance our teen audience attaches to such issues as sibling relationships, final exams, sportsmanship, jobs, jealousy, lying and dating. Our research also

shows us that enveloping these issues in good-spirited comedy with relatable characters is a very powerful way to impart information and positive messages to our target audience.

From its inception, NAME YOUR ADVENTURE has been supervised by Dr. Gordon Berry, a graduate professor at UCLA and author of many works on children, their values and the effects of television. Dr. Berry's role is to ensure that every segment of the program has an articulated curriculum goal and that the goal is fulfilled throughout the program development and production process. This process has worked so well in terms of ensuring the educational and informational content of NAME YOUR ADVENTURE, we decided to apply it to the balance of the schedule as part of our commitment to make the entire Saturday morning teen block educational and informational this Fall.

NBC has employed Dr. Karen Hill-Scott as an educational consultant to our comedies to ensure that SAVED BY THE BELL continues in the strong tradition of quality educational programming recognized by Congress and the FCC, and that CALIFORNIA DREAMS follows in that tradition. Dr. Scott is an Adjunct Professor at UCLA and has her own child development consulting firm. She has worked on children's television productions for 15 years.

NBC and Dr. Scott have put an elaborate process in place to ensure that every episode of our comedies will be designed to serve the educational and information needs of teens. First, Dr. Scott holds briefings with our writer/producers before any stories are developed to discuss the prerequisites of educational content. Second, working with the show's creative staff, an overall educational objective for each series is developed. Written educational objectives are then designed for every episode. She then reviews concept outlines and scripts, giving the writers detailed notes and suggestions. Dr. Scott consults on every step of the production process to ensure that the objectives are met through strong, clear messages appropriate to teenagers. This process is documented and each episode is reviewed at its completion.

In summary, NBC has committed to make educational and informational material an integral part of the theme, story line and character development of each episode of our teen-oriented comedies. And we are fulfilling that commitment through a detailed and painstaking process that relies on expert educational consultants who work with us on every phase of program development and production. Clearly, NBC has come a long way since the Children's Television Act was adopted: from a schedule that consisted mainly of cartoons to a two and a half hour block of live-action programming specifically designed not only to

entertain, but to serve the educational and informational needs of teenagers.

NBC is also committed to Family Specials in prime time, when many teens and younger children watch television. Most recently, we aired Barney's first network special and an animated version of Charles Dickens' DAVID COPPERFIELD.

NBC also serves children through our major public service campaign, THE MORE YOU KNOW. These spots, which feature popular talent on NBC programs, run during our teen block and at other times when young people are in the audience. The spots deal with such issues as non-violent resolution of conflict, substance abuse and education. NBC is also broadcasting the Ad Council anti-violence PSA campaign featuring President Clinton.

In conclusion, NBC has met the challenge of the Children's Television Act to increase the quantity of educational and informational children's programming. We serve an important segment of the audience, teens, which is often ignored by our competitors. We provide our teen viewers with high quality, live-action programs: The acclaimed SAVED BY THE BELL will be starting its sixth season this fall. NBC was the first network to offer a weekly program specifically designed to fulfill the requirements of the new Act. And next season, with the help of two expert

educational consultants, NBC will have what I venture to say will be one of the highest levels of educational and informational children's programming offered by any network or other national programming service. We are proud of both our efforts and their results, and hope you will agree they fulfill both the letter and spirit of the Children's Television Act.